

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 BELFAS 00084 231431Z  
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-20  
COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 /090 W  
-----088380 231937Z /50

R 231212Z MAY 78  
FM AMCONSUL BELFAST  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1899  
INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN  
AMEMBASSY LONDON

UNCLAS BELFAST 84

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PINT, UK  
SUBJECT: OFFICIAL UNIONISTS PICK CANDIDATE FOR KEY  
PARLIAMENTARY SEAT

1. THE SITTING MP, WILLIAM CRAIG, MAY 22 WON THE LOCAL  
OFFICIAL UNIONIST PARTY NOMINATION FOR THE KEY EAST  
BELFAST SEAT IN THE NATIONAL ELECTION EXPECTED LATER IN  
THE YEAR. THE COMPETITION WAS STRONG. CRAIG WAS A  
UNIONIST MP IN STORMONT AND A CONTROVERSIAL HOME AFFAIRS  
MINISTER DURING THE TURBULENCE OF THE LATE 1960S. WITH  
THE BREAKUP OF THE UNIONISTS IN THE EARLY 1970S, HE FORMED  
THE RIVAL VANGUARD PARTY. AFTER VANGUARD'S VIRTUAL DEMISE IN  
THE MAY 1977 LOCAL ELECTIONS, HE EFFECTIVELY DISSOLVED THE  
PARTY AND WAS ACCEPTED BACK IN THE OUP LAST MARCH. THERE  
WAS SOME FEELING AGAINST HIM, AND HE HAD TO BEAT FOUR OTHERS.

2. THE EAST BELFAST ELECTION WILL BE PARTICULARLY INTERESTING.  
IN A STRONGLY PROTESTANT CONSTITUENCY, ONE COULD EXPECT AS  
ABLE A CANDIDATE AS CRAIG TO WIN EASILY. BUT THE NON-SECTARIAN  
ALLIANCE PARTY IS PUTTING UP ITS LEADER, OLIVER NAPIER.  
ALTHOUGH A CATHOLIC, NAPIER WILL BE A STRONG CONTENDER.  
ALLIANCE RECEIVED 31 PER CENT OF THE MAY 1977 VOTE IN THE  
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CONSTITUENCY, AGAINST THE UNIONISTS' 29 PERCENT. THE UNIONIST  
FAMILY VOTE WILL BE SPLIT SHARPLY, SINCE THE OUP REFUSED AN  
ELECTORAL DEAL WITH PAISLEY'S DEMOCRATIC UNIONISTS, WHO WILL  
PUT UP THEIR OWN MAN. A COUPLE OF OTHER TINY PROTESTANT-  
PROENTED GROUPS WILL PULL OFF MORE VOTES.

3. AN ALLIANCE WIN WOULD BE UNPRECEDENTED AND A GREAT BOOST

FOR THIS PARTY. A SIMILAR WIN IN APRIL LEFT THEM BUOYANT:  
THE LORD MAYORALTY OF BELFAST BEGINNING JUNE 1.  
UNIONISTS HAD ALWAYS HELD THAT OFFICE BUT LOST IT THIS  
TIME WHEN THE TWO UNIONIST FAMILY VOTES SPLIT OFF AND  
ALLIANCE RODE IN ON A HYBRID COALITION. WE CAN EXPECT UNIONISTS  
TO TRY TO DISCREDIT ALLIANCE AMONG PROTESTANT VOTERS.STOUT

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** ELECTION CANDIDATES, NATIONAL ELECTIONS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 23 may 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** n/a  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:**  
**Disposition Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1978BELFAS00084  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D780217-0816  
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**Message ID:** 8fa40799-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Office:** ACTION EUR  
**Original Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Page Count:** 2  
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**Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Retention:** 0  
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**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** N/A  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 2610392  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** OFFICIAL UNIONISTS PICK CANDIDATE FOR KEY PARLIAMENTARY SEAT  
**TAGS:** PINT, UK, (CRAIG, WILLIAM), (NAPIER, OLIVER)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014